DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 864 HE 023 865

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TITLE Development of a Study Skills Curriculum as a Component of the ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation Experience at Brenau: Curriculum and Program Planning.
PUB DATE May 90
NOTE 46p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Programs; *Course Descriptions; *Curriculum Development; Higher Education; Institutional Research; Listening Skills; Notetaking; Private Colleges; School Orientation; Single Sex Colleges; Special Needs Students; Student Educational Objectives; *Study Skills; Summer Programs; Test Wiseness; Time Management
IDENTIFIERS *Brenau College GA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to develop a study skills curriculum to be incorporated into the existing ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation program at Brenau College in Georgia, to assist underprepared students admitted under special admissions programs in achieving greater academic success. An eight-step curriculum development process was followed, which consisted of the identification of: (1) institutional mission; (2) characteristics of Brenau students; (3) environmental factors impacting the curriculum; (4) specific learning outcomes expected; (5) specific curriculum content; (6) methods of delivery; (7) resources to be utilized; and (8) means of assessing student learning and the curriculum itself. The practicum product was a syllabus for a 5-session study skills program; the syllabus is provided in the appendix. The syllabus covers study habits, time management, effective reading, notetaking and listening skills, and test taking. Recommendations are offered for implementation of study skills content in ACT I and other college programs. Includes 31 references. (JDD)

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Development of a Study Skills Curriculum as a Component of the ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation Experience at Brenau

Curriculum and Program Planning

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Nova University

May 1990

HE 023 865

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to develop a study skills curriculum to be incorporated into the existing ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation program at Brenau College. In view of the wide range of academic aptitude represented at the college and the numbers of underprepared students admitted by special consent of the admissions committee each year, a mandatory introductory study skills component was perceived as an excellent means of assisting students in achieving greater academic success and thereby potentially increasing retention at the college.

An eight step procedural process was followed which consisted of the identification of (1) institutional mission, (2) major characteristics of Brenau students, (3) environmental factors impacting the curriculum, (4) specific learning outcomes expected, (5) specific curriculum content, (6) methods of delivery, (7) resources to be utilized and (8) means of assessing the curriculum itself as well as student learning. The final product of the study was a syllabus for the five session study skills component of ACT I, SD 100.

The four recommendations which emerged as a result of the study were to (1) implement the new sequence in ACT I in the fall of 1990, (2) develop and offer regularly a

more intense (one to three hours per week) study skills course as an elective for any student, (3) require such a one to three hour per week course in the summer before, or the fall of matriculation, for students admitted with academic concern and (4) offer a faculty development workshop on teaching study skills within the disciplines across the curriculum.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

ABSTRACT. ii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE 4

3. PROCEDURES 10

4. RESULTS. 13

5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 27

REFERENCES 34

APPENDIX 37

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Brenau College is a private, four year liberal arts college located in Gainesville, Georgia. The Women's College of Brenau consists primarily of residential students of traditional college age with a wide range of academic backgrounds. As with many institutions of higher education in recent years, Brenau faces intense competition for a reduced applicant pool and is feeling the economic impact of reduced enrollments. Consequently the issue of retention has become paramount in the minds of the college administrators who recognize the cost involved in recruiting each student and the increased cost represented when any of those students leave prior to graduation.

As one vehicle to support students and thus retention at Brenau, the college developed an Extended Freshman Orientation Program entitled "ACT I," Short for "getting your act together." (Brenau College, 1988: 18). The overall goal of the program has been to help freshmen "make the transition to college life easier" and help them "cope with college and other life changes" (Brenau College, 1988: 18). Over the years, the actual content of ACT I meetings has varied significantly according to currently perceived needs; however, the format has essentially remained constant: five days of intense orien-

tation, academic advising, group identity-building activities, and placement testing prior to the start of fall classes; followed by weekly fifty-minute meetings in assigned small groups with a specified faculty and peer advisor throughout fall and winter quarters. These weekly meetings of ACT I provide an established delivery framework for offering a series of study skills classes to support student academic success and thereby student retention.

The purpose of this Practicum was to develop a five hour introductory study skills curriculum which could become a fixed component of the ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation Program at Brenau. Given the wide range of academic aptitude represented at Brenau (as evidenced in part by combined SAT scores of entering freshmen ranging from 630 to 1250) and the numbers of academically underprepared students admitted to the institution by special consent of the Admissions Committee each year (Robinson, 1989), a brief study skills course to bring to the students' attention areas of weakness and methods for improvement appeared to have excellent potential as a retention tool. It was further postulated that the addition of a well designed study skills component to ACT I would give meaningful cohesion to the ACT I program, be supportive of freshmen students at all academic levels, improve students' attitudes toward learning, and help improve the self concept of students who may have long

suffered from never really knowing "how to study."

The study was carried out by means of an eight step curricular design procedure the product of which was the syllabus (Appendix A) for the five part Study Skills Component of ACT I, SD 100. The process began with a thorough investigation of Brenau's institutional mission as evidenced in the college catalog, statutes and faculty guidelines followed by consideration of the identifiable characteristics and needs of Brenau's student body that would seem to require and be supported by a study skills course. Specific learning outcomes, activities and curriculum content were then determined based upon a review of the literature and existing programs and in consultation with subject experts. Methods of delivery were identified which were appropriate to the content, suitable to the student population and the available instructors, and were adaptable to the time constraints of the course. Resources were identified which could be distributed in each class, as opposed to purchasing a text, and it was determined no additional personnel beyond the regular ACT I staff would be required. Finally, means of assessing both student learning and the curriculum itself were identified and built into the final product development.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this investigation to Brenau College lies in the potential support that implementation of the final product could provide to the identified population attending the institution. The self diagnosed need for study skills support by the majority of freshmen surveyed over the past two years, combined with faculty concern regarding student readiness to tackle college level work, and Brenau's stated purpose and academic program objectives all require that attention be paid to developing better study strategies among the accepted students entering the institution. Furthermore competition for the shrinking pool of traditional age applicants, the resulting enrollment of greater numbers of lesser prepared students, and the high cost of recruiting would recommend that all reasonable efforts be made and avenues explored to enhance the learning success and retention of students matriculating at Brenau.

A review of the literature revealed that the topic of improving effective study skills has long been an issue of concern in American education (McMurry, 1909; Cole, 1962; Devine, 1987). What was noticeably different in the literature on college study skills curricula being

published in the 1970's and 1980's was the emphasis on using such courses to achieve higher student retention, particularly (though by no means exclusively) among the increasing numbers of academically underprepared freshmen admitted to American higher education today (Astin, 1985; Blanc, 1983; Noel el.al., 1987). Astin further pointed out that high school students taking fewer solid academic courses and more "soft" courses that are graded less stringently has resulted in inflated student grade averages while simultaneously leaving students' basic academic skills undeveloped (Astin, 1985: 214). The excellence of American higher education has suffered as a result.

Statistics indicate that thirty to forty percent of freshmen entering American higher education today are deficient in college-level reading and writing skills and therefore in need of remedial education. These academically underprepared students are generally "unsure of themselves and in need of success as well as in need of tutoring and basic skills development." (Noel et.al., 1987: 97). They also have a need to feel comfortable with the learning environment" (Noel et.al.: 97). Academic reinforcement programs, such as study skills courses, can provide effective support services to underprepared students which promote their success and boost retention rates" (Noel et.al.: 281).

Tinto (1987) suggests that college attrition is by no means solely related to academic failure. In fact,

voluntary withdrawal from an institution generally has little to do with academic difficulties, and academic dismissal only accounts for about 10 to 15 percent of student departures (Tinto, 1987: 51). Nevertheless with the growing percentages of students entering higher education deficient in college level reading and writing skills, and with one quarter of all freshmen taking remedial coursework in either mathematics, writing, or reading, the indication might be that academic dismissals are bound to increase (Tinto, 1987: 52). Therefore, while simultaneously recognizing and addressing the whole series of causes of attrition, institutions cannot ignore that the study skills and habits required for successful academic performance in college are frequently going to be absent among entering freshman, regardless of measured abilities and past high school performance. "It is one thing to have the intellectual capacity for college, it is another to be able to apply it to the daily tasks of college work" (Tinto, 1987: 51).

Tinto lists six basic principles of institutional action which he views as governing successful retention programs. The very first states that institutions must ensure that new students enter with, or have the opportunity to acquire, the skills needed for academic success. While successful programs can not eliminate failure they are, according to Tinto, "marked by a willingness to provide students with those sorts of skills

and by some degree of success in doing so" (Tinto, 1987: 138). The author adds that successful institutions do not provide academic success programs just out of a sense of institutional necessity as much as from "a sense of obligation that students who are accepted for admission should be given a reasonable opportunity to complete their program of study" (Tinto, 1987: 138). Tinto's sixth principle, indeed, states that "Education, not mere retention, should be the goal of institutional retention programs" (Tinto, 1987: 140).

Stupka recommends a carefully structured extended orientation program to teach new students now to direct and shape their own lives by providing them "with critical information and skill-building experiences in a positive learning environment" (1988: 2). Most new students, he notes, find college very different from any of their previous learning experiences, and even among those who did well in high school, poor study habits abound. Stupka advocates teaching new college students to become "proactive educational consumers" and encouraging their attitude toward learning to shift from "what do I have to do to pass this course?" to "what can I do to get the most out of my education" (1988, p. 3)?

Gibson of Georgia State University's Counseling Center likewise emphasizes the importance of the student's responsibility in his or her own education. The two day Study Skills Circus seminar offered at Georgia

State covers a wide range of traditional topics on study skills. The common thread, however, is that the "student like a ringmaster stands firmly at the center of the arena and must take charge of what goes on" (Gibson: 1982). The program begins with students' self assessment of strengths and weaknesses related to study skills.

Other authors such as Bartlett (1988) and Devine (1987) recommend starting off a study skills course by having students complete a personal study habits inventory, or asking them to identify what study skills are important. The goal is to focus student attention on what study skills are, which ones are critical to college work, and where the student's shortcomings may be, followed by the encouraging news that improvement can be made and effective skills learned. Although it has been demonstrated that heredity and environment affect school learning, motivation, learner self esteem and competencies in using study skills also influence learning, and the latter (unlike the former) are more controllable. "Students can be taught to more effectively read, write, compute, think and study" (Devine 1987: 3).

This topic is appropriate to the Curriculum and Program Planning seminar as it involves development of a specific curriculum design. The practicum includes the specific procedures for curriculum design outlined both in the seminar textbook (Gagne' and Briggs, 1988) and class lectures, placing heavy emphasis on those elements

viewed as essential to curriculum development and curriculum integrity.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

The ACT I Extended Freshman Orientation Program at Brenau was designed in general to help freshman make a smoother transition to college life. Actual course content and delivery methods have varied considerably from year to year although subjects such as time management, test taking, career planning and self motivation have generally appeared in one fashion or another. These and other topics have not, however, been systematically developed nor has there been meaningful assessment of results. The Student Futures Committee of Brenau in recent discussions (Wright, 1989) determined that there exists a need for developing improved study skills among students both as a support to the student and for purposes of improved retention. The committee further identified the ACT I Program as being the logical initial delivery system for the study skills assistance. This practicum was designed to develop the study skills curriculum which would become a fixed component of the ACT I program at Brenau.

Following a review of the projected Act I schedule for the 1989-1990 academic year by several members of the Student Futures Committee, it was determined that a five unit block should be devoted to study skills development

among the freshmen in the program. This would consist of five fifty-minute sessions. The following steps were taken to appropriately design the specific curriculum:

1. Through a review of the College Purpose statement as well as other written evidence of institutional policy, Brenau's institutional mission and philosophy were identified to determine that the development of a study skills curriculum supported and was supported by that mission and should therefore rightfully be an institutional priority;

2. By means of a review of SAT Scores, academic records and College Student Inventory reports of entering freshman, the major characteristics of Brenau students were identified with a view to designing a study skills curriculum to best support the existing population and its needs;

3. Environmental factors impacting upon the proposed curriculum were considered, and course and unit objectives were adapted accordingly; that is, consideration was given to time limitations (fifty minute sessions with certain ACT I business required each session as well); physical setting (comfort of classrooms, light, air, seating arrangements, view of board etc.); and the psychological environment (level of faculty and administrative support and outwardly positive attitude toward the proposed curriculum, particularly among the ACT I faculty implementors). The rationale for policies that would govern the curriculum and impact upon the learning environment, such as grading system, homework assignments etc., were stated and explained. Active steps were taken to insure a highly supportive psychological atmosphere;

4. Based on both the College Student Inventory Institutional Report and the recommendation of the Student Futures Committee, the specific learning outcomes expected to be the result of the curriculum were identified; that is, goals and objectives and what students were expected to learn were clearly stated;

5. Following a review of related literature and consultation with professionals in the field, specific curriculum content was identified and the scope and sequence of lessons clarified; individual lesson titles and content were

specified; and learning activities or planned experiences anticipated were also identified;

6. Aided by associated literature, methods of delivery (be it lecture, video tape, discussion etc.) were identified and steps taken to assure methods were appropriate to content;

7. Resources to be utilized (text books or mimeographed handouts, for example), equipment needed (overhead projectors, etc.), and personnel required were all identified;

8. The means of assessing student learning and attitude throughout the curriculum (such as pre and post self assessment of study skills, student journals, time-use charts, copies of class lecture notes, etc.) as well as means of assessing the curriculum itself, including student evaluation of same, were identified. A review of existing literature and consultation with practitioners aided in this procedure.

The end product of this curriculum design was an ACT I Study Skills Course Syllabus to be handed to all freshmen enrolled and containing the following elements:

1. Clearly and positively stated goals and objectives and expected learning outcomes;
2. Sequence and content of specific lessons;
3. Class procedures, specific assignments, means of assessment and due dates;
4. Grading, absence, and make-up policies.

To evaluate the curriculum design itself both a subject matter expert and a curriculum design expert were consulted. A questionnaire was designed to provide each expert the opportunity to respond to the curriculum as proposed.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The procedural process outlined in Chapter 3 resulted in the findings which will be described below. The course syllabus which was developed as a result of the investigation represents a synthesis of the major findings of the study and is included in Appendix A.

1. Identify Brenau's institutional mission and philosophy. A number of statements in the Purpose of Brenau were found to be directly supportive of the concept of study skills development within the academic program. The Brenau Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin 1988-1990 states that to implement its purpose of offering baccalaureate programs with a liberal arts foundation Brenau "provides personalized instruction and innovative programs to encourage critical thinking and self-motivated learning; offers students the opportunities . . . to identify and enhance their talents, . . . creates an environment which promotes the growth of students in their intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and psychological development, . . . encourages students to be responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions" (Brenau, 1988: 8).

Several objectives of the Brenau educational program as derived from the Purpose and published in the

Statutes and the Brenau Bulletin were likewise found to have direct applicability to the stated goals of this project. The Bulletin states (Brenau, 1988: 64):

> The primary purpose of Brenau is to offer a liberal arts education as a basis for academic and professional competence. Brenau believes in creating supportive environment in which an individual may develop the selfdirecting qualities necessary to cope with and contribute to a pluralistic and contemporary world.

Stated objectives of Brenau's educational program which would be supported by study skills enhancement include (Brenau, 1988: 64):

> The student should be able to think critically and creatively, to organize thoughts, and to express them clearly and effectively in speech and writing.
>
> The student should develop the communication skills of listening and reading, being able to analyze various forms of argument, assessing validity and reliability.
>
> The student should have the opportunity to explore the self so as to develop a positive self-concept and to make full use of individual potential.

Additional support for a study skills emphasis in ACT I was derived from the published Faculty and Staff Guidelines of Brenau. Section 7-01A which deals with faculty instructional responsibility indicated that it is the responsibility of the faculty "to continually adapt teaching strategies in the implementation of the course to meet the needs of all students" (Brenau, 1989: 7-01). The following investigation of Brenau's student body and its stated and perceived needs lent further credibility to the

concept of enhanced study skill support in the Freshman ACT I program.

2. Identify the major characteristics of Brenau Students. Section 7-02 of the Brenau Faculty and Staff Guidelines (1989) describes the type of student recruited and admitted to Brenau College.

> As a general rule an effort is made to acquire as many superior students as possible, who show potential for development, even though their academic records do not reflect recommended levels of achievement. Brenau feels that it can serve well the students who wish to profit from an academic environment designed for small group and individualized instruction. In an effort to implement the above policy, the admissions officers, as well as the college recruiters, endeavor to attract students who are well suited to the Brenau environment and who can profit from same.

The Brenau Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin 1988-1990 states that all applicants to Brenau "are considered on the basis of their academic and personal qualifications and potential" (Brenau, 1988: 28). Although Admission Office policy requires a minimum combined Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Score of 800 for regular admissions to the college, policy also allows for review and potential admission of applicants falling below the eight hundred score by the Admissions Committee. The average combined SAT score for all freshmen entering Brenau (including those admitted to the Learning Disabilities Program) in the fall of 1989 was 820 (Hale, 1989).

Self reported characteristics of student preparation for college work were obtained from a review of the Retention Management Systems College Student Inventory

administered to all freshmen at Brenau in the fall of 1988 and again to freshmen entering fall of 1989. In both years, the Institutional Summary Report (CSI, 1988 and 1989) indicated high percentages of entering freshmen perceived themselves in need of help with study skills. On a ten point scale, getting help with study habits had a mean priority score of 6.66 among the 128 Freshmen entering Fall 1989; and in fall of 1988, among the 133 freshman tested, the mean priority score was 6.78.

Discussion of the CSI results among faculty members at a meeting of the Student Futures Committee (Wright, 1988) resulted in identification of significant weaknesses frequently noticed by faculty in the classroom, including poor time management (late, incomplete assignments), inadequate notetaking skills, and poor test preparation and test taking strategies. Such prevalant student weaknesses, it was postulated, could begin to be remedied via a study skills component in Act I.

3. Consider environmental factors impacting upon the proposed curriculum. A variety of environmental factors were deemed important to consider in the development of the study skills component for ACT I. First, only five sessions would be allocated to the project initially and each of those would be only fifty minutes in length. Within each fifty minute session certain "official business" would be required, further reducing delivery time. Study skill sessions would be at least one week

apart, sometimes two, and therefore feedback would be irregular beyond the self-contained session. The ten ACT I groups would each be located in different physical settings with distinct options for seating, lighting, air, and general comfort, etc. Each group would be taught by a different ACT I instructor with potentially distinct attitudes toward the proposed curriculum. Administration support for the program and encouragement of the faculty involved was viewed as an important aspect of the psychological environment affecting the course. Therefore support from the Vice President and Academic Dean of the College was solicited and received (Sites, 1989) as was the support and encouragement of the Director of Act I. Next in consultation with the ACT I faculty it was determined that satisfactory and timely completion of assignments from the study skills segments would constitute twenty-five (five per assignment) from a total possible one hundred (100) points for the quarter.

An additional five points was designated for attendance at each session. The following chart was determined to regulate the assignment of letter grades for the course.

A	90 - 100 points
B	80 - 89 points
C	70 - 79 points
D	60 - 69 points
F	Below 60 points

With the grading system as motivator to attendance and participation it was also decided that a highly supportive psychological atmosphere emphasizing a proactive approach

(as opposed to a remedial focus) was critical to student involvement and success in achieving the goals of the project. Both the syllabus and instructor preparation would emphasize this focus.

4. Identify the specific learning outcomes expected to be the result of the curriculum. Given the allotted time frame for teaching the study skills component of the ACT I program, that is five, fifty minute sessions, serious consideration had to be given to deciding what could constitute reasonable objectives for the course sequence. An initial step in this decision making process involved a review of the written materials for existing study skills or student success programs on both national and local levels such as Becoming a Master Student (Ellis, 1985), Georgia State's Study Skills Circus (Gibson, 1982), Devine's guide for teachers entitled Teaching Study Skills (1987), and Pauk's classic How to Study in College (1962). From these materials and others several common themes and major objectives began to emerge. Timetables and sequencing patterns for teaching the skills were also observed.

The next step in determining specific goals and objectives for Brenau's course involved telephone consultations with a representative of College Survival, Inc., publishers of Becoming a Master Student; with Dr. Bonnie Fritz and Dr. Linda Pounds, instructors in the Studies Skills Circus and other related programs and

seminars at Georgia State University; and with Dr. Ron Luckie and Dr. Sarabeth Huntley, codirectors of Study Skills Associates and contracted instructors for occasional weekend study skills programs at off-campus locations of Brenau College. In each conversation the question raised was: What would be the most productive use of five, fifty minute sessions on study skills?

In every case the time limitations were recognized, it was advised that each session should not attempt too much, and it was recommended that raising student awareness of the availability of learnable study strategies should be emphasized. The importance of time management was also stressed.

Therefore it was determined that the learning objectives for the sequence should be as follows:

A. To develop an awareness among the freshmen of what study skills are, the wide range of strategies available, how and why they are useful, and that they are learnable.

B. To assist students in discovering where they are on a continuum of good study habits and where improvement could be made.

C. To help students identify what constitutes a balanced schedule and to encourage the development of a scheduling habit to effectively use available study time.

D. To introduce students to the SQ3R reading method as an example of how to organize and get the most out of the college reading assignments they will encounter.

E. To assist in the development of listening and notetaking skills in a typical college lecture situation.

F. To help students discover the importance of beginning exam preparation on the first day of class in addition to introducing techniques for effectively taking objective and essay exams.

G. To make student's aware of how anxiety impacts upon test taking and that they can learn to manage it.

Taken as a whole the course objectives were designed to increase students' awareness of their own habits and generally create a positive attitude toward the development of improved skills and studying effectiveness.

5. Identify specific curriculum content, scope, and sequence and identify learning activities planned. The determination of specific curriculum content involved a review of literature on in-house developed programming at other institutions, nationally or locally advertised programs and texts, and research articles on the topic (Cole, 1962; Ellis, 1985; Rowe, 1989; Luckie and Huntley, 1989; Armbruster and Anderson, 1981; Bartlett and Knoblock, 1988; Devine, 1987; Gibson, 1982; Hoffman, 1983; Kristine, 1985; Pauk, 1962: Simpson, 1984). In addition to written references, possible course content was discussed with several experts in the field (Fritz, 1989; Pound, 1989; Luckie and Huntley, 1989). Also, the researcher attended an all-day workshop presented by Luckie and Huntley to derive better insight into appropriate course content. With the course objectives decided, this review, consultation and observation provided guidance in selecting from the wide array of examples and possibilities the specific course content to be used to achieve the objectives within the limited time frame available. Consideration was given to (a) ordering the lessons most advantageously to build upon

one another and (b) identifying learning activities that could most effectively achieve course objectives within the fifty minute period.

It was decided that Session One would address objectives A and B and would consist of the in-class administration of a study habits inventory for student self evaluation of such topics as motivation, planning habits, memory and reading skills, observation and test taking styles. Although several different inventories were considered, those of Devine (1987: 11) and Ellis (1985: 20) were considered the most appealing. It was decided to utilize the Ellis (1985) exercise (The Discovery Wheel) from Becoming a Master Student since it was particularly well designed to meet the stated objectives of the lesson and contained a complete process for synthesizing the results of the self evaluation, including a coordinated homework assignment. The instrument was also of the appropriate length to allow for completion and discussion during the fifty minute class time. The homework assignment for the class would require students to reflect on the results of their inventory and write down action plans. These would be turned in to the instructor within three days with a copy retained by the student.

Study Skills Session Two addressed objective C and provided students with information regarding time management for studying including such topics as schedules, prioritizing tasks, studying in increments vs. cramming,

knowing your best time of day, using often wasted time, knowing where to study, and avoiding distractions. Class activity included the development, in teams, of daily, weekly and quarterly schedules (based on students' actually known academic, civic and social/personal commitments) and the identification of conflicts and foreseeable stress points. Homework required the completion of the three schedules by each individual, copies of which were to be turned in to the instructor within three class days.

Objective D involving the SQ3R reading method was approached in Session Three. Students were to be given a three or four page article to look over for two or three minutes at the outset of class. They would then be questioned rapidly on its content as an introduction to the importance of survey methodology in college reading assignments. Following more detailed explanation of the process, its purpose and its variations, an in-class practice session with a relevant reading assignment would be undertaken to allow students to demonstrate understanding while practicing the skills. Homework activity for this session required the completion of a handout sheet requesting survey information, question formulation, and text annotation from an actual class reading assignment of the student's selection.

In Session Four the content shared consisted of listening and note taking techniques most effective in a classroom and useful later for exam preparation (Objective

E). The initial class activity was a brief (ten minute) lecture for which students would be told to take notes in preparation for an open notebook quiz. Homework required students to turn in a set of their actual class notes, annotated with indications of strengths and weaknesses in style, based on Session Four principles, and a paragraph statement of goals for improvement.

The final study skills session addressed objectives F and G. Information on both objective and essay exam taking skills would be shared. The concept of test anxiety and its management would be introduced briefly to include practice with biofeedback and short relaxation exercises. The final homework assignment was a post-study habits inventory focusing on changes or improvement in the subject matter of the five study skills sessions. A brief essay analyzing individual progress or change in study skills and/or attitude toward learning and studying was a required activity. Students would likewise be asked to evaluate the course sequence, delivery, methods and instructor, and to indicate its general value to them as well as indicating their interest in a longer more detailed study skills course in the future.

A daily journal was initially considered as an ongoing activity to be required of all students in the study skills sequence, to allow writing practice while chronicling the process of learning to be a college student. However, upon consultation with available experts

(Fritz, 1989: Pounds, 1989) it was determined that greater benefit would be derived from not overloading the student in a partial segment of a one credit hour class and focusing instead on well prepared responses to the specified homework assignments.

6. Identify Methods of Delivery. The identified method of delivery for all five study skills sessions was a combination of instructor-led directive questioning with minimal "lecturing" to introduce or summarize the major concepts. This provided the "meat" for class discussions and small group or individual activity appropriate to the segment objective. In each study skill session a "hands-on" activity was provided to avoid boredom and enhance transfer of the learning experience. Homework assignments were designed to further assist in the internalization of the principles shared and provide for practicing skills.

7. Identify resources to be utilized and personnel required. Given the brevity of the course sequence no textbook was required. Resource material and an outline for each class "lecture" discussion would be copied and provided to each instructor by the ACT I Director. Handouts and homework assignments would be mimeographed and distributed to students in the appropriate class. Copies of the Discovery Wheel inventory (Ellis 1985) would be purchased from College Survival Inc. for distribution and use in the first class session. Faculty selected for this project consisted of the ACT I instructors already

assigned by groups since Freshman Orientation; no additional personnel was required.

8. Identify the means of assessing student learning and attitude as well as assessing the curriculum itself. The primary means of assessing student learning and attitude was derived from the pre and post self assessments administered in the first and following the last class segment. Specific homework activities for each lesson such as the time-use charts, weekly and quarterly schedules, and copies of class lecture notes provided additional feedback vis a vis the acquisition of the skills introduced. Student evaluations of the course and instructor constituted the major assessment of the curriculum itself following its delivery.

With respect to the curriculum design and the content of this course, experts were consulted and provided with a questionnaire to evaluate the product. The primary concern of the curriculum design expert involved the validation of objectives for the proposed study skills component. This was addressed by the questionnnaire provided to the content expert, a teacher of study skills, who was asked to evaluate the appropriateness of the chosen content. The content expert, recognizing the time constraints and the stated purpose of presenting an introductory overview on available study strategies, fully agreed that the stated objectives were reasonable and clearly stated. Her one recommendation was that the third

session on SQ3R might be more effective if textbook annotation were most heavily emphasized. Consequently that session in the syllabus (appendix A) was renamed "Effective Reading and Text Annotation - An Introduction to SQ3R" acknowledging the slight change in emphasis.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The procedures followed in the development of the ACT I Study Skills Component Syllabus (Appendix A) adhered to accepted methodological practice as outlined by Gagne and Briggs (1988). The process allowed for careful consideration of Brenau's mission and philosophy, and as a valuable by-product, the institution's admissions policies. Those policies, which to a large degree might be labeled "open-door", emphasize the commitment of Brenau to the enhancement of student potential and appear in harmony with mission and purpose statements of the college. However, the same "open door" policy combined with Brenau's faculty guidelines to "meet the needs of all students" (Brenau, 1989: 7-01) would also seem to require that Brenau put forth an effort to support underprepared students with assistance in developing effective study skills for college.

Continuing the investigatory process with a more specific identification of the academic characteristics of Brenau's student body lent still greater credence to the stated need for study skills development among entering freshmen whose SAT average in 1989 was 820 (Hale, 1989). More important than the SAT scores was the self identified need and/or desire to learn study strategies to effectively

master college work. The College Student Inventory (CSI, 1988 and 1989) in two successive years produced data strongly indicating both the self perceived need and student receptiveness to receiving assistance in the area of study skills.

Having determined the philosophical basis and population need for the study skills course, environmental roadblocks were encountered that required consideration. Limited time to explore study skills within the existing curriculum was clearly the biggest dilemma. Attempts at offering non-required courses in the past had met with low enrollment; therefore, a "something-is-better-than-nothing" attitude toward the five hour component offered within the ACT I Freshman Orientation Course was adopted and ACT I was considered a viable place to begin. Recognizing that many study skills programs are two to five credit hour courses or are workshops conducted over larger blocks of consecutive time, the five separated fifty minute sessions had to be developed as awareness builders, and as self contained mini workshops. With ten different instructor/advisors teaching the material, each session also needed to be clearly and simply outlined for accomplishment in the fifty minute session. And to encourage receptivity by students, both the syllabus and faculty attitudes had to emphasize a proactive versus remedial approach to studying and learning. Above all, the focus of the sequence had to be the value to all students

of learning to study more efficiently.

From the combination of mission, purpose, student characteristics, and environmental factors the expected learning outcomes were determined. In particular an effort was made not to attempt too much in any one session and above all to keep it interesting, to avoid total lecturing, to involve students actively and to assure they would recognize the relevance of the subject matter to their personal situations. In-class activity as well as homework assignments were gauged to provide both practice and relevance.

Evaluation procedures were a final and significant aspect of this sequence development. Evaluation of the curriculum design itself was achieved by the selection of Dr. Margaret Martin as a design expert to evaluate the project and provide feedback. Dr. Bonnie Fritz, a study skills instructor at Georgia State, was asked to evaluate the curriculum content and provide feedback on that aspect. Both experts were provided with a questionnaire to facilitate response, and comments from both were incorporated into the design. The pre and post self assessment of study skills as well as student homework assignments were designed to provide feedback on where students entered, what they learned, and where they perceived themselves as they exited the sequence. Their evaluation of the course and instructor provided a final analysis of curriculum impact.

Three major implications for Brenau College are raised as a result of this study. First, given the numbers of lesser academically prepared students matriculating at Brenau each year and their self perceived need for study skills enhancement, it is doubtful that a five hour component built into ACT I can, in and of itself, provide all students with the optimal level and depth of assistance they need to be successful academically. Although the ACT I effort should achieve an increased awareness of study strategies available and provide initial practice in using some key skills, nevertheless time limitations clearly prohibit covering many key ideas and do not allow sufficient practice with the actual skills introduced. The need to provide additional opportunities for further skill development is strongly implied and a followup one to three hour elective class winter quarter might be advisable.

A second implication derived from the results of this study concerns the need to address the readiness level of at least some entering freshman with a greater in-depth and required focus on study skills <u>prior</u> to matriculation or <u>simultaneously</u> with ACT I. The results of the College Student Inventory (CSI, 1988 and 1989) explored in this study combined with lower than average SAT and high school GPA scores would suggest a need to require students accepted under those conditions to take a summer school skills course or enroll in a one to three hour per week

course in the fall of their freshman year, perhaps utilizing their regular coursework assignments as the basis of skill development. Such a procedure might be expected to enhance student skill level as well as self esteem and potentially grades. Brenau might also realize increased rates of student retention as a result.

Finally the level of faculty-perceived and student self-diagnosed need for study skill enhancement would perhaps imply a need to integrate skill development and practice within subject specific coursework in lieu of or in addition to a separate study skills curriculum. As such, foreign language teachers might build into their curriculum discussions of or handouts on "how to" techniques for effectively studying for and learning a foreign language. Reading strategies and vocabulary development practices might need to be more specifically built into freshman English. Exam taking strategies, note taking and time management could be reinforced across the curriculum. A faculty workshop on integrating the teaching of study skills in specific coursework would potentially expedite and facilitate this process.

Specific recommendations derived from the results and implications of this study would be as follows:

1. That Brenau College's ACT I program adopt the five part study skills sequence (as described in the syllabus in Appendix A) as a permanent part of the ACT I curriculum and that it be implemented in the fall of 1990.

2. That a one to three credit hour elective study skills course be developed and offered regularly

for the skill enhancement of any Brenau student in need, but that such a course be available especially winter quarter for Freshmen exiting the ACT I introductory sequence and desiring to continue with more in-depth skill development.

3. That students accepted to the college with SAT scores below the recommended 800 point total and/or students accepted with a high school GPA below the recommended 2.0 level be automatically required, as a condition of special admission, to take a study strategies course (again one to three credit hours) either in summer quarter prior to regular matriculation or during fall quarter of their freshman year.

4. That a faculty workshop be designed to assist instructors in integrating the teaching of study skills into their specific subject matter course curricula.

Recommendation one will be presented by the author to the Director of ACT I and subsequently to the ACT I faculty. No further approval process would be necessary for implementation.

Recommendation two could be implemented as a part of the on-going revision of the Women's College core curriculum which contains a category for elective core outcomes support coursework. Such a recommendation from the author would have to go through the Assessment Committee, Academic Affairs and a faculty vote to achieve implementation.

Recommendation three would be made by the author to the Admissions Committee for consideration and further action. Since similar suggestions have been raised before and similar concern expressed by many faculty and the Student Retention Committee, additional documentation such as this study and a specific recommendation might be

expected to receive renewed attention.

The fourth recommendation emanating from this study will be forwarded by the author to the Faculty Development Committee. Successful workshops on teaching critical thinking within the disciplines have been successfully offered in the past year and well received.

All four recommendations along with a copy of this study will be provided to the Administration of Brenau, specifically the Vice President for Academic Affairs. While implementation of any one of the above recommendations should help enhance student study skills, clearly across-the-board implementation holds great promise for providing incoming freshmen with the best possible chance for academic success and for providing the institution with increased student satisfaction and retention.

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APPENDIX A

SYLLABUS FOR STUDY SKILLS COMPONENT FOR ACT I - SD 100

SYLLABUS

Course Title: Study Skills Component of
ACT I SD 100

Instructor:

Term: Fall 199__

Course Description: This five unit introduction to studying effectively in college is designed for all freshmen entering Brenau. The course will explore each student's self perception of her study habits and skills, and encourage improvement in areas of perceived weakness by providing information on and examples of learnable techniques for studying more productively. Available methodologies for managing time, reading efficiently, listening and taking notes in class, and taking exams will be covered.

Course Rationale: Many students, including those who did very well in high school, enter college lacking truly effective study skills to cope with the increased reading and work loads they will encounter. Many do not realize that there exist numerous useful strategies that anyone can learn in order to study more efficiently and increase learning in general. During the course of this study skills component of ACT I it is hoped the student will contemplate her personal relationship to study and learning and will recognize that her attitude, commitment, and individual initiative are essential components in her achievement of success in college. An increased awareness of how to become a more successful student is the primary goal of this class sequence.

Course Objectives:

A. To develop an awareness among the freshmen of what study skills are, the wide range of strategies available, how and why they are useful, and that they are learnable.

B. To assist students in discovering where they are on a continuium of good study habits and where improvements could be made.

C. To help students identify what constitutes a balanced schedule and to encourage the development of a scheduling habit to effectively use available study time.

D. To introduce students to the SQ3R reading method as an example of how to organize and get the most out of the college reading assignments they will encounter.

E. To assist in the development of listening and notetaking skills in a typical college lecture situation.

F. To help students discover the importance of beginning exam preparation on the first day of class in addition to introducing techniques for effectively taking objective and essay exams.

G. To make students aware of how anxiety impacts upon test taking and that they can learn to manage it.

Course Requirements: Students should attend each class session, participate actively, thoughtfully complete the five homework assignments, and turn them in by the designated date. Homework assignments to accompany each class must be turned in to the instructor (office or campus mail) no later than noon of the Monday following class.

Course Evaluation and Grading: This sequence will constitute five of the nine sessions which make up the fall quarter of ACT I. Attendance at each session will be awarded five (5) points toward your total ACT I grade. Satisfactory and timely completion of each homework assignment will earn an additional five (5) points. Therefore this sequence constitutes exactly fifty percent of the total ACT I course grade for Fall Quarter.

The general point distribution for the Fall ACT I program is as follows:

	Points
Five study skills sessions	
Attendance	25
Homework	25
Four additional ACT I sessions	
Attendance	20
Homework	10
Instructor discretionary points for participation, etc.	20
TOTAL	100

Letter grades will be assigned as follows for ACT I:

A = 90 - 100
B = 80 - 89
C = 70 - 79
D = 60 - 69
F = Below 60

Note: Since missing one study session and its accompanying assignment would lower a student's grade by a full letter, the following policy has been designed in the event of unavoidable absense. Students not attending a study skills session may still turn in a homework assignment for grade. However, to receive credit she must indicate from whom she received the notes on class discussion upon which she based her homework, and write up a brief summary of the class experience missed. (Contact instructor in the event you must miss a class and need details on this policy.)

ACT I adheres to the attendance policy and guidelines as published in the Brenau College Bulletin on page 18.

Required Course Materials: All course materials will be provided in class by the instructor and cost will be subsumed in the ACT I lab fee. There is no required text.

Course Outline:

I.	Session One	(date)	Study Skills and the Study Habits inventory
		Homework:	Reflect on results of in-class inventory activity and write out a personal action plan for future studying. Submit to ACT I instructor by Monday following class.
II.	Session Two	(date)	Managing Study Time - The Optimal Schedule
		Homework:	Complete three schedules (a daily, weekly, and quarterly) and submit a copy of each to ACT I instructor by Monday following class.

III.	Session Three	(date)	Effective Reading and Text - Introduction Annotation to SQ3R
		Homework:	Complete the handout sheet provided in class using a textbook reading assignment from one of your own classes this quarter. Submit to ACT I instructor by Monday.
IV.	Session Four	(date)	Notetaking and Listening Skills: Getting more from Class Lectures and Discussions
		Homework:	Xerox a set of notes taken in one of your lecture courses this quarter (at least 4-5 pages) and make notations in red ink in the margins indicating strengths and weaknesses in your notetaking style based on principles discussed in this class. Write a paragraph statement of personal goals for improvement. Submit to ACT I instructor by Monday.
V.	Session Five	(date)	Test Taking and Test Anxiety
		Homework:	Complete the study habits Inventory provided in class. Write a brief essay (one page) analyzing your individual progress/change in study strategies and attitude toward learning and studying this quarter. Submit to ACT I instructor by Monday.

END

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March 21,1991